

**ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION**

5 A clamp has a handle assembly, a gripping assembly having a pair of jaws that can be opened and closed to grip an element, and a shaft assembly. The shaft assembly has a flexible shaft having a proximal end that is operatively coupled to the handle assembly and a distal end that is operatively coupled to the gripping assembly. The shaft assembly also has a rigid element that can be placed in a first position where the rigid element supports the shaft in a manner where the shaft cannot be bent, and in a second position where the shaft can be bent.